

Small Scale Farming and Agricultural Products Marketing for Sustainable Poverty Alleviation in Nigeria

L'AGRICULTURE À PETITE ÉCHELLE ET LA COMMERCIALISATION DE PRODUITS AGRICOLES POUR LA RÉDUCTION DURABLE DE LA PAUVRETÉ AU NIGÉRIA

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Abstract: Agricultural productions in developing countries have largely been on subsistence basis. The farmers only produce for their families and quantity of food produced are grossly inadequate for the growing population. There is increase widespread in the level of poverty amongst the people, most especially those living in the rural areas. Small scale farming has become one of the ways to tackle the problem of lack and poverty amongst these people. The paper therefore, examines how Small Scale farming assists in alleviating poverty in both rural and urban cities; most especially through marketing of agricultural products to the people. Relevant data were sought from the 356 respondents selected for the study through the Key Informant Interviews (KII). The Student T test and Chi square statistical techniques were further employed to test the Hypotheses stated in the study. Result of the finding reveals the importance of Small Scale Farming and Agricultural Products Marketing in poverty alleviation, most especially among the rural dwellers. It also indicated lack of access to fund as the major problem facing Small Scale Farming and increase cost of transportation as the major problem facing marketing of agricultural products. The Paper recommends that Individuals and Government can combat some of these challenges facing Small Scale Farming by providing adequate basic social infrastructures; make available more funds to the farmers and create more employment opportunities amongst others. The paper concludes that Agriculture no doubt, is an important sector that needs to be given attention in any developing economy.

Key words: Small scale farming; Marketing; Rural dwellers; Key interview guide; Agricultural products and poverty

Résumé Les productions agricoles dans les pays en voie de développement étaient principalement sur la base de subsistance. Les agriculteurs ne produisent que pour leurs familles et la quantité des aliments produits est nettement insuffisante pour la population croissante. Il y a une augmentation généralisée de la pauvreté parmi la population, plus particulièrement ceux vivant dans les zones rurales. L'agriculture à petite échelle est devenue l'une des façons pour s'attaquer au problème du manque et de la pauvreté parmi cette population. L'article examine donc comment l'agriculture à petite échelle aide à soulager le problème de la pauvreté dans les villes rurales et urbaines; plus particulièrement à travers la commercialisation des produits agricoles. Des données pertinentes ont été recueillies auprès des 356 répondants sélectionnés pour l'étude en utilisant la méthode des interviews d'informateurs clés (IIC). Le test T et les techniques statistiques de Chi carré ont été employés plus tard pour tester les hypothèses énoncées dans l'étude. Le résultat de la recherche révèle l'importance de l'agriculture à petite échelle et la commercialisation des produits agricoles dans la réduction de la pauvreté surtout parmi les habitants des zones rurales. Il a également indiqué le manque d'accès aux fonds comme le problème majeur auquel l'agriculture à petite échelle fait face et les coûts de transport croissant comme le

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problème majeur de commercialisation des produits agricoles. Le document recommande que les individus et le gouvernement peuvent combattre certains de ces défis confrontés par l'agriculture à petite échelle, en assurant des adéquates infrastructures sociales de base; mettant plus de fonds à la disposition des agriculteurs et créant davantage d'emplois entre autres. L'article conclut que l'agriculture est sans aucun doute un secteur important qui doit être accordé plus d'attention dans n'importe quelle économie en développement.

Mots clés: Petite agriculture à petite échelle; Commercialisation; Habitants ruraux; Guide d'interview clés; Produits agricoles et pauvreté

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INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is one of the important sectors in a developing economy, not only because of its contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) but for employing greater proportion of a country's labour force in productive activities (Adegboye, 2004; Babatunde and Oyatoye, 2005). In Nigeria, It provides food for the populace and served as one of the major source of revenue to the country before independence, most especially before crude oil was discovered in large commercial quantity at Oloibiri in 1958. The discovery led to the shift in Agricultural production to Crude oil exploration. This scenario led to decline in Agricultural production with increasing population growth rate, which consequently led to rising food prices in most Nigerian cities and rural areas (Babatunde and Oyatoye 2005).

Hassan and Omotola (2006) argued that, given Nigeria's resource base, especially in relation to agriculture, she should not have food crisis, however, this was never the case. They further noted that this food crisis manifests in the form of quality and quantity of food intake; volume of food production; prices of food; population growth rate; and the earning power of the people.

The quantity of food produced are grossly inadequate for the growing population. This consequently, makes the food prices to be exorbitant or at the high side, thus making it not to be at the reach of the poor. The quality of food intakes by most people are below the standard required because of their inability to afford the nutritionally sufficient diet. The high inflation rate in the economy further compounded this dire situation thus having deteriorating effect on the purchasing power of the people which made the food products to be unaffordable. Hence, the available food became unevenly distributed, resulting to excess food in some places and shortages in other places (Babatunde and Oyatoye 2005 ; Hassan and Omotola 2006). It therefore, becomes necessary for the agricultural products to be moved from farm centers to the individuals who desire to buy them for their immediate consumption. This paper, aims at examining how Small Scale farming assists in alleviating poverty in both rural and urban cities; most especially through marketing of agricultural products to the people.

1. MATERIAL AND METHODS

1.1 Literature Review

1.1.1 Concept of poverty

There are many definitions of Poverty but very few amongst these definitions will be considered and suffice for explicitly explaining its meaning in this paper. World Bank Report (1990) defines poverty as hunger, lack of shelter, being sick, unemployed, inability to go to school or not knowing how to read amongst others. According to Nasir (2002) Poverty entails socio economic and political deprivations that result to lack of access to the basic necessities of life. Ijaiya and Bello(2001) and The Encyclopedia Americana (1989) considered poverty from two different perspectives:

- (1) Moneylessness – In the form of insufficiency cash and chronic inadequacies of resources to satisfy basic human needs.
- (2) Powerlessness – In the form of lack of making use of opportunities and choices open to a person or somebody being governed by forces and persons outside their control.

Poverty is seen as lack of material well being, insecurity and low self confidence and not believing in one self. It is also considered as not only insufficient income to buy goods and services but as lack of basic capabilities to live in dignity (Narayan, 2000; Sengupta, 2003). It manifests in various forms such as lack of income, inadequate access to employment opportunities, inadequate access to the means of supporting rural development, hunger and malnutrition, ill health, limited or lack of access to education and other basic services, increase morbidity and mortality from illness, homelessness and inadequate, unsafe and degraded environment, destruction of natural resources and social discrimination and exclusion (World Bank 1990; United Nations 1995; Obadan, 1997; Ijaiya and Bello, 2001).

There is more rural poverty than urban poverty in most developing nations. The consequences of poverty ranges from development of slum in cities to upsurge of criminality in the society (World Bank 2005a, 2005b; Adeyemi et al. 2009; Ogunleye 2010).

1.1.2 Poverty alleviation

These are various measures by individuals, government and nongovernmental organization to reduce poverty in the society. The Nigerian government under various military and civilian administrations have come up with different programmes at alleviating incidence of poverty in the society. These policies include: establishment of farm settlements scheme under the third National Development Plan, the Operation Feed the Nation (OFN) under Gen Obasanjo's administration, the Green Revolution under Sheu Shagari's government, establishment of Peoples Bank; Community Bank; Directorate of Food, Roads and Rural Infrastructures (DIFFRI); Better Life for Rural Dwellers and the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) under the Gen Ibrahim Babangida's government, Gen Sani Abacha's Family Economic Advancement Programme (FEAP); and Family Support Programme (FSP), the National Poverty Eradication Programme (NAPEP) between 1999 – 2007 under the civilian administration of Obasanjo. However, most of these programmes though laudable, did not have much effect on the life of the people due to the fact that they lacked clearly define policy framework and proper guidelines for poverty alleviation. There are also problems of political interference and lack of continuity. Hence Poverty seems not to be removed from the life of the people. However, out of all these poverty alleviation programmes the National Directorate of Employment (NDE) has had a long stay and continue till date (Ogunleye, 2010; Anonymous, undated).

1.1.3 Small scale farming

In Nigeria, farming is basically done on a small scale. Most farmers produce for their family alone and in some cases little for others. The food production between 1950 – 1960 was at subsistence but self sufficient level. This indicates that at this period the small scale farming done was adequately producing for the people (Hellneiner 1996, Babatunde and Oyatoye, 2005). However, with the increase in population growth rate coupled with dwindling agricultural production, there was problem of food shortages which made many not to have enough food, experience hunger, malnutrition, growth retardation and sometime death due to starvation (Babatunde and Oyatoye, 2005).

Small Scale farming is often associated with backwardness, non productive and non commercial subsistence agriculture (Kirsten and Van Zyl, 1998; Zithutha, 2010). A small scale farmer is described as one whose scale of operation is too small to attract the provision of the services s/he needs to be able to significantly increase productivity (Kristen and Van Zyl, 1998). Backwardness is associated with small scale farming due to the fact that there is little production at a significantly high cost; crude implements are used and the whole farming system is subjected to traditional methods which does not encourage economies of large scale production. Porter and Phillip – Howard (1997) therefore argued that small scale farming is non capital intensive and highly subsidized. The obvious measure of small farms is farm size and hence, Small farms are defined as those with less than two hectares. This is the most common form of organization in agriculture, even in industrial countries. Small scale farming or Small holder farming is also known as family farming (Zithutha, 2010). The production objective of small scale farming ranges from subsistence to infrequent or inconsistent surplus production for marketing purposes (Fraser, 2003; Zithutha, 2010). According to Zithutha (2010) the Small scale farming is the one practiced in rural areas on a small scale basis with the purpose of feeding family members and selling surplus. In this type of farming, different crops such as vegetables, fruits etc are planted and the farmers also engaged in animal husbandry such as keeping goats, bees, cattle, sheep, and chickens. They are in recent time involved in fish, snail farming and piggery amongst others. The farmers occasionally sell these animals or crops to obtain income as an immediate relief to their poverty(Zithutha, 2010). The Small scale farmers generate income for farming from several sources such as Pensioners and handworkers. The women are involved in farming activity in situation where their husband go to town to earn money, thus helping for the subsistence of the family. Auto consumption and subsistence are still important characteristics of small scale farming. The women also help their husbands in decision making and assist them financially to enhance their farm work. The women work as farmers, food processors and distributors. They constitute a formidable and significant source of labour in small farming and predominate in the retail marketing of agricultural products, most especially in Yoruba land (Patel and Anthonio, 1973; Olayide et al. 1980; Ekpere, 1986; Ezumah, 1990; Akingbade, 1992; Abiola and Omoabugan, 2003; NEPAD, 2009).

The Food and Agriculture Organisation (2008) reports indicated that a broad based agricultural growth that includes small holder farmers can have a large impact on poverty reduction. The potential for increased productivity is often larger on smaller farms because of their efficient use of family labour (FAO, 2008; Zithutha, 2010). The Small scale farms contribute significantly to the nation's food supply and to local economies. The variety of food crops produced in Nigeria are enough to make the country self sufficient in food crop production. Agricultural growth have effect on rural poverty reduction not only through farm incomes but by stimulating the non – farm economic sector in rural economies, especially in developing countries. The poor rural households rely on agricultural production for a significant share of their income, thus meaning that increase agricultural productivity is closely related to reduction in rural poverty. Therefore, supporting

Small holder farmers would not only enhance world food security but make a significant dent in poverty (Famoriyo, 1979; IFPRI, 2008; Rice, 2005; IFAD, 2009; Zithutha, 2010).

1.2 Research Methodology

The research study was conducted in eight autonomous communities located in Oke – Ero Local Government Area of Kwara State, Nigeria. The communities are namely: Ekan; Ayedun; Ilale; Imoji; Erinmope; Idofin; Odo – Owa and Ilofa. The time frame for the study was eight weeks, which happened to be between July 5th to August 23rd 2010. The study population consisted of those aged between 70 years and below. A total of 356 respondents were drawn from the population under study and relevant data were sought from them through the Key Informant Interviews (KII). This enables the interviewers obtain first hand information about the subject matter of the research from the respondents. An average of 44 – 45 people were selected from each community considered for the study. A key Interview Guide (KIG) was designed to explore in detail the issues to be discussed in the research. The Interviews are loosely structured, containing both open and close ended questions; with Key Informants drawn from Staff in Agriculture Department of the Local Government, Farmers' Cooperative Societies and Individuals either working or residing in the Study Area. This represents the major stakeholders identified and it is hoped that by doing this, divergent interest and perceptions about the research will be captured. At the end of each Interview a summary sheet was prepared thus reducing information to relevant ones. The data from the Key Informant Interviews are displayed in clear format to highlight underlying relationships and trends. The Student T test and Chi square statistical techniques were further employed to test the Hypotheses stated in the study. The results of the test of the Hypotheses were analysed and presented using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 14.0 Version.

2. RESULTS AND FINDINGS

A short Interview guide was prepared containing 15 items of major topics and issues to be covered under each study questions. The Interview guide was broadly divided in to two sections: Section A containing questions relating to Small scale farming and Section B having questions on Agricultural product marketing. The total number of Key Informants selected for the study are 356 as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1: Distribution of Key Informants From the Selected Autonomous Communities in the Study Area

Community	No of Key Informants Selected
Ekan	45
Ayedun	45
Ilale	44
Erinmope	44
Iloffa	45
Odo owa	44
Idofin	45
Imoji	44
Total	356

Source: Authors' Fieldwork, 2010

The Informants' profile revealed that $\frac{1}{3}$ of the respondents are female while $\frac{2}{3}$ are male. This reveals that greater proportion of the Small Scale farmers in the study area are men. These farmers are engaged in mixed farming, with very few of them involved in only crop productions. The reason given for mixed farming was that in almost every household they rear domestic animals like goats, sheep and pigs; in addition to farming. The informants mostly engaged in food crops production with few involved in cash crop production. The food crops planted by the farmers are Yam, Cassava, Maize, Banana and Vegetables. They produce less of other food crops such as Beans, Rice, Potato and Tomato; thus depending on those brought from the Northern part of the country to beef up their food supply. One of the Informants commented that :

“our people like pounded yam too much, that is why we plant a lot of yam here”.

Other comment given was:

“ we plant cassava because it can be used for variety of foods and it is very easy to plant”.

Maize and Guinea corn are also carbon hydrates food highly demanded by most household, hence the reason for most farmers planting these crops. The study also revealed that women are mostly involved in planting vegetables. This probably was due to the fact that most of these women plant the vegetables in their back yard. The women are able to plant all year round. According to one of the female farmers :

“Planting of vegetables has become my hobby; It offers as additional source of income to me, this is apart from the one we eat”.

The major types of cash crops planted by the small scale farmers are Cocoa, Kola nut, Groundnut, Cotton, Palm tree, Soya beans, Mango, Orange and Cashew. The Interviewers were told that Kola nut, Palm tree, Mango, Orange and Cashew are cash crops mostly grown in the study area. The Small holder farmers now concentrate less on Cocoa, Groundnut, Cotton and Soya beans. According to one of the farmers:

“The Palm tree, Cocoa and Kola nut trees happened to be the major cash crops planted in the past but now Mango, Orange and Cashew have become important economic trees”.

The resultant effect of this was the springing up of Agro based Industries, both in rural and urban areas that used these fruits as their major source of raw materials for production. Hence, this led to the concentration in the production of these fruit crops. One of the farmers interviewed said:

“ Our Kola nut and Cocoa trees are aging and not providing us income like before but thank God, there is now demand for Mango, Orange and Cashew ”.

The farmers apart from rearing the domestic animals are engaged in Poultry, Cattle, Snail and Fish farming. This was reflected in the increase number of Poultry and Fish ponds in most houses in recent time. The Farmers were of the view that this offers them a source of living and employment opportunity. A farmer put its benefit in this manner:

“ It seems those of us engaged in poultry and fish farming have benefited greatly from this business because it has really changed our life for better ”.

The greatest proportion of Small Scale Farmers employed Manual method, while very few individuals and Farmers Cooperative Societies only adopted the Mechanical techniques of Farming. This was because most of these farmers are poor and could not afford the equipment and technology needed for mechanized farming. The few ones who adopted mechanical farming techniques (2%) are the rich elites and Cooperative Societies who can afford the fund needed for such projects. A lot of these farmers own less than hectare and one to two hectares farm size, hence did not see much need for the use of modern farm techniques (Zithutha, 2010). The problems identified by these farmers are lack of access to fund, lack of basic infrastructures, poor harvest, labour shortages, limited technology and livestock health problem. However, most of the farmers interviewed agreed that lack of access to fund is the major problem facing Small Scale Farmers. They were of the view that other problems pose less threat to Agricultural productivity, for instance they said that most farmers have vaccinated their livestock against outbreak of diseases such as Avian flu and Swine flu; and made use of fertilizer and pesticides to bring about improvement in their farm yield.

The Government have been opening up the rural areas through the construction of new roads and provision of basic social infrastructure to the people. All these measures are geared towards alleviating the challenges faced by these farmers. A greater proportion of those selected for the Interviews revealed that women were mostly involved in Marketing of Agricultural products than Men. The women also assist in the distribution of most of these agricultural products from the farms to the Markets. They took part with their husbands, in making major financial decisions that affect their household (Abiola and Omoabugan, 2003). It is only on few occasions that Men do the Marketing themselves. The bulk of food crops marketed by these women are: Yam, Cassava, Grains and Vegetables. Rice and beans are produced only on a very small scale. The people preferred imported Rice to the locally produced ones, while part of the large quantity of Beans produced in the Northern Nigeria are sold to the people to supplement the little one produced in the study area. The major problem reported to be facing the Marketing of Agricultural products was the Increase Transportation cost. Other lesser problems identified are storage problem, lack of Information, poor road network, inadequate rural credit system, lack of standard unit of measurement and price fluctuations. There are greater proportions of farm products that are destroyed due to lack of storage. This is because most of the farm products are perishable and non durable. The farmers have no adequate information about the market situation and hence found it difficult to ascertain where their products are in great demand. A good knowledge of the market situation would have enable them to move their products from where there is surplus supply to where there is scarce supply of products. This would have definitely enable them sell the products at a good price. There is no standard unit of measurement for selling these farm products due to the different adulterated measuring units being used by the sellers in the market. The poor road network constitute as a problem to the Small scale farmers, by making it difficult for them to move easily, products from their farms to the markets. This and other factors consequently led to the increase cost of transportation.

The seasonal nature of farming led to price fluctuations, this is because there is usual increase in price at the end of farming season when farm products are in short supply, and reduction in price at the beginning of farming season when new farm products will be in excess supply. There is no adequate rural credit system due to widespread poverty and low saving culture amongst the rural dwellers, despite the existence of Cooperative Societies amongst them. This may be due to the fact that most of these farmers source of livelihood was the subsistence farming which provided them no reasonable income to take care of their needs and hence have little remaining for saving. This situation make it difficult for them to acquire modern tools for use on their farms. They cannot afford to adopt the mechanized method of farming that would bring them large scale productions. The Interviewees agreed that Road is the most frequently mode of transporting their farm products from farm centers to the markets. Other mode of transportations mentioned are canoe, ferry and rail. The

means of transporting these products through road are motor vehicle, bicycle, tricycle, motorcycle, camel, donkey and itinerant trader. However, motor vehicles carry the highest proportion of the farm products and hence that is why Transportation cost constitute a major constraint in the marketing of agricultural products. A significant proportion of the small scale farmers were of the opinion that the most important benefit of Agricultural Product Marketing is that it makes products available where it is needed. Other benefits given are: It serves as a source of living to the people; It facilitates trade and commerce; It encourages more production of food and it enables farm products get to the final consumer.

2.1 Test of Hypotheses

There are two hypotheses to be tested for the study and they are stated as follows:

H₁ : Method of farming adopted by Small Scale Farmers significantly affects their farm's income.

H₂ : Small Scale farming did not offer significant benefits to the farmers.

2.1.1 Test of hypothesis H₁ with one sample t test

One Sample t Test technique was used to determine whether or not the method of farming adopted by Farmers have significant effect on Income received from farming. Three methods of farming were considered in the study and they are: manual, mechanical and both methods. The manual method was the most favoured by the farmers while few farmers only preferred mechanical and both method. We observed that most of the farmers (86%) adopting manual method agreed to be receiving annual income below N500000. This indicates that greater proportion of the farmers earn little from their farm proceeds. There are farmers (5%) that indicated that their annual income falls between N3Million and above, they adopted Mechanical method of farming while those farmers using both methods (9%) reported they earned between N1 Million to N2.999Million. The one Sample t Test as shown in Table 2 further revealed that the method of farming have significant effect on the farm's yield at 95% confidence level, hence we accept the Null hypothesis that there is significant relationship between method of faming and farm's yield and reject the alternative hypothesis of no significant relationship.

Table 2: One-Sample T Test for Method of Farming and Income Received from Farming

Test Value = 0						
	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
					Lower	Upper
Methods of Farming	42.053	355	.000	1.33427	1.2719	1.3967
Estimated income received from farming	36.308	355	.000	2.52809	2.3912	2.6650

Source: Computer's Print out, 2011

2.1.2 Test of hypothesis H₂ with chi square statistical techniques

Chi – square Statistics was used to test if Small Scale Farming offers significant benefits to the farmers at 95% confidence level. The Chi – square tabulated at 1 degree of freedom,95 % Confidence level = 3.841 while the calculated Chi – square at 1 degree of freedom for the benefits are: Improved standard of living = 77.4; Provision of more food = 10.1; Development of Agro based Industries = 7.022 and Source of employment opportunities = 43.191. In other words, the most important benefit of Small Scale Farming was improved Standard of living (73%); followed by Provision of more foods (58.4%); Source of employment opportunities (43%) and Development of Agro based Industries (32.6%). All these benefits are Significant at 95% Confidence level. Therefore, we reject the Null hypothesis that Small Scale Farming did not offers significant benefits to the farmers and accept the Alternative hypothesis that Small Scale Farming offers Significant benefits to the farmers. The Chi – Square calculated is shown in Table 3 below:

Table3: Test Statistics for Benefit of Small Scale Farming

	Improved standard of living	Provision of more foods	Development of Agrobased Industries	Source of employment opportunities
Chi-Square(a)	77.404	10.112	7.022	43.191
df	1	1	1	1
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.001	.008	.000

a 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 178.0.

Source: Computer's Print out, 2011 χ^2 tab = 3.841, P = 0.05 and d.f = 1

CONCLUSIONS

This paper has clearly discussed the importance of Small Scale Farming and Agricultural Products Marketing in poverty alleviation, most especially among the rural dwellers. It has also indicated lack of access to fund as the major problem facing Small Scale Farming and increase cost of transportation as the major problem facing marketing of agricultural

products. There are various measures that can be taken by Individuals and Government to combat these challenges such as: Provision of basic social infrastructures like road, water and electricity; Availability of more funds to the farmers through Agricultural loan Scheme; Creation of employment opportunities through establishment of Agro based Industries; Conduct of Researches by Agricultural Research Institutes and Universities that will boost efficient and effective all year round Agricultural productions and expose our local farmers to modern farming technology.

Government should encourage Mechanised farming by highly subsidising chemicals, farm equipments and other services to the Small Scale Farmers; Train Middle level Manpower such as Agriculture Extension Officers to assist local farmers about the modern method of farming and Establish large Government Farms in rural areas to enhance more food productions. It is hoped that if positive measures are taken to encourage the Small Scale Farmers to increase their productivity that would go a long way in reducing poverty not only among the rural dwellers but also those living in the cities; despite the fact that the incidence of poverty is more pronounced in the rural areas. Agriculture no doubt, is an important sector that needs to be given attention in any developing economy. It is therefore necessary that Agricultural Sector should be given priority for more food productions; so that better living condition can be achieved and sustained by the people.

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